

# The Pueblo; Whodunit?

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The very week the nation was puzzling over the rights and wrongs of Lloyd Bucher's conduct as commander of the captured spy ship *Pueblo*, Allen W. Dulles died. The coincidence is to the dramatist's taste, for Mr. Dulles was Mr. Intelligence, and as the Bucher hearings proceed, we glimpse the shadowy outline of how the government operates its intelligence services in peacetime.

After the Second World War, the intelligence profession in this country was in the doldrums. The Communist bloc under the iron hand of Stalin was both monolithic and menacing. The times called for the gathering by our government of information not obtainable by normal, open methods, and the doing of "dirty tricks" that could not be laid directly to Washington's door. With the passage of the National Security Act of 1947, the Central Intelligence Agency came into being and was placed under the National Security Council. In its earliest years, the Agency made little headway. But with President Truman's appointment of a select committee to study the entire intelligence community and its structure, the cloak-and-dagger business came into its own. Without detracting from contributions of the other members of the committee, it can be said that the report it produced was Allen Dulles', and he devoted the rest of his life to making the most of it. He was first appointed Deputy Director of CIA, then Director by Mr. Eisenhower. His concurrent and large responsibility was Director, Central Intelligence, in charge of the whole US intelligence effort, not just CIA. Not until John and Robert Kennedy, were two brothers, Allen and John Foster Dulles, to hold so much power at the same time.

Those who framed the national intelligence directives arising from the National Security Act had, with great care, explicitly stated that the Director, Central Intelligence was responsible for and was authorized to acquire "clandestine" or secret intelligence, but not to perform secret operations. At that time, the late forties, the government did not contemplate the staging of such operations, except in rare instances for which there would be specific approval. It was this limitation that Allen Dulles attacked vehemently, and although there was opposition to his views at the White House and in both the State and Defense Departments, he prevailed. The Director, Central Intelligence was subsequently authorized to put his plans for secret

operations to a special group of the National Security Council, and with their approval to execute them. With responsibility for both the covert collection of information and secret operations, Director Dulles had what he wanted, very wide discretionary power not only to ferret out other people's "secrets," but to set in motion and to supervise all varieties of clandestine interventions into the affairs of other nations, to make and break governments. (The Bay of Pigs was the most painful illustration of how that power could be misused, how plans could be made on the basis of "inside" information and carried out in a wave of publicity that made no pretense of denying official US

Yet even at the moment of Dulles' victory, President Eisenhower and others added certain safeguards designed to deter a runaway CIA. The Agency was not to be granted funds sufficient to support such operations as the *Pueblo* or the Bay of Pigs, nor the manpower to carry them out. CIA was not to have for itself, on its own, the manpower, material and funds for "Secret Operations" which duplicated resources in other agencies. The authors of these restrictions felt they had set up adequate protection against Parkinsonian proliferation. They badly underestimated Allen Dulles and his disciples. By the end of the Eisenhower regime, the CIA was drawing manpower from nearly all government sources; it was getting material in abundance, primarily from Defense; it had its hand in the pocket of most other departmental budgets. Pure intelligence (the gathering of information) was but a tip of the iceberg. As much as 90 percent of the Agency's strength outside the US was in "Secret Operations," with the Department of Defense as chief supplier.

The role of the Director, Central Intelligence, it should be noted, is distinct from the CIA. The DCI has overall responsibility for intelligence, whether CIA, the military, the State Department or others. In a very special sense then, it follows that the Director, Central Intelligence may retain this authority when he has been authorized to mount a secret operation, such as the *Pueblo*. This fine distinction is raised by the statement of the present DCI and CIA chief, Richard Helms. "Neither this Agency [CIA] nor I personally," he said, "have had anything to do with the mission of the *USS Pueblo*, the ship itself or any of its crew." Mr. Helms carefully skirted the issue of whether the Director, Central Intelligence "had anything to do" with the mission. If he did not, why not, and who did? Either the Navy was operating on its own authority a clandestine mission in peacetime (contrary to national policy), or it was not. If it was not, and if the CIA was not, then Mr. Helms would have us look elsewhere. Could this mission have been under the operational control of the National Security Agency? But a decision to have placed such an operation under the super-secret NSA would most certainly have involved the White House, State and Defense and the DCI.

One begins to understand why the Navy Admirals are having an embarrassing time over the *Pueblo*. The courage and judgment of Commander Bucher, the efficiency of Navy procedures are irrelevant. The *Pueblo* very probably was not sailing under the operational control of the Navy at the time of its capture. Once on the high seas, it came under the jurisdiction of another agency. At that point, the code of James Bond, not gallant old Navy, took over. That is the significance of Commander Bucher's comment, that "these people were not working for me." "These people"